

## Choral Artists eager to tackle 'Elijah' oratorio

By [Edward Reichel](#)

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Since Brady Allred became director, the Salt Lake Choral Artists have broadened their musical horizons significantly beyond what one would expect from a community organization.

The ensemble has performed several large-scale works over the past few years, and it will add to its repertoire this weekend when it sings Felix Mendelssohn's 1846 oratorio "Elijah" on Saturday in Libby Gardner Concert Hall.

Joining the choir for the performance will be baritone Darrell Babidge in the title role, tenor George Dyer and soprano Kiersten Gunlogson. They'll be accompanied by a select orchestra of local and imported musicians.

Allred realizes that works such as "Elijah" test the limits of his choir's abilities, but he also knows from past concerts that the members want to be challenged. They enjoy the chance to perform works that have real substance to them.

"Most of the choir members leave rehearsals happy, because there is so much drama in ('Elijah')," Allred told the Deseret News.

For most of the choir, this is their first encounter with Mendelssohn's oratorio, but there is a contingency of former Mormon Tabernacle Choir members in the Salt Lake Choral Artists who sang it a few years ago. "And that has helped us," Allred said.

"Elijah" is an anomaly, because most 19th century composers didn't write oratorios. And Mendelssohn is an anomaly, too, to some extent. "Mendelssohn is so important in the 19th century renaissance of baroque music and in bringing Bach's music to the public after it had been neglected for so long," Allred said.

And "Elijah" certainly owes a great deal to the baroque. "There is a strong Bach influence in it," Allred said. "It contains so much counterpoint and fugal writing, you have to know which parts to articulate. You have to know when a part is important and when it's not."

Allred has a long history with "Elijah." He sang it with Robert Shaw in Carnegie Hall, and he's conducted it in Pittsburgh when he was the director of the Bach Choir there. "I had such a great experience singing it with (Shaw)," he said.

The version of the work that Allred decided to use is Shaw's unpublished edition. "Just like with his version of Brahms' 'A German Requiem,' Shaw went through and revised the texts of 'Elijah' to make it flow a little better. That was the version I used in Pittsburgh."

There is a further personal connection between Allred and "Elijah." Allred was a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Birmingham, England, where "Elijah" had received its first performance under Mendelssohn's direction.

"We would hold our stake conferences in the old town hall where the work was premiered, and I would play the same organ that was used for that performance. Because of that, I feel a strong connection with Mendelssohn and especially with 'Elijah.'"

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► If you go . . .

What: Salt Lake Choral Artists, Brady Allred, director  
Where: Libby Gardner Concert Hall, University of Utah  
When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.  
How much: \$18.75 general admission, \$12.75 students  
Phone: 581-7100  
Web: [saltlakechoralartists.org](http://saltlakechoralartists.org)

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